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The first half of this pamphlet stresses the value of foreign language learning in general from historical and cultural points of view. The second half indicates the growing importance of Spanish in the economic and cultural spheres as an inducement to student selection of Spanish as a second language. (JH)

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WHY ELECT SPANISH

by

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MACOMB, ILLINOIS

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WHY ELECT SPANISH

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WESTERN ILLINOIS UNIVERSITY

Communication is vital to the free interchange of ideas and Spanish, the second great language of our hemisphere, plays a special role in the interrelating of peoples and ideas. Thus, an encouragement of young people to develop a language skill and knowledge of the history, culture, and literature of the Spanish Speaking World is a link in a program of international, intercultural education and becomes an integral part of Western Illinois University's general education program. However, the co-sponsorship of the publication of this pamphlet with the Downstate Illinois Chapter of the American Association of Teachers of Spanish and Portuguese, "Why Elect Spanish?", is more than just a link. It specifically relates to the University's Program in International Understanding.

Western Illinois University has a long-recognized position in the field of international education. In 20 years, our "Classroom-Round-the-World" has enrolled more than 5000 students and teachers for a direct examination of world areas and problems—including the Spanish-speaking areas of Mexico, Central and South America and Spain. The University brings outstanding world leaders—teachers, writers, musicians, business executives, civil servants, etc.—to our campus for extended appointments as Visiting International Lecturers. Our Junior Year Abroad Program assists students in arranging for an international education abroad while maintaining academic continuity at home. We publish the *Journal of Developing Areas* to create an international forum for development concepts.

"Why Elect Spanish?", is another step toward our goal of making students more fully aware of their own and contrasting cultures through education. The success of this and similar projects is important for the encouragement and preparation of a generation of leaders who will bring breadth and vision to the world of the future.

A. L. Knoblauch
President

WHY ELECT SPANISH

PREHISTORY—A TELEOLOGICAL CONCEPT:

Some time, centuries ago, in the predawn of recorded history, certain members of warring tribes must have been overcome by the spectacle of destruction and felt the futility of protracted conflict to settle differences and solve mutual and diverse problems. The long development of all man's institutions must have begun at that time when he began to talk and reason about his situation on this planet and in this universe. This first communication constituted the first step toward establishing the practical and ideological concept of a school—although the physical forces confronting him were of such magnitude that he would need to remain largely physical for centuries before these forces could be tamed to a degree that would allow him to let burn freely the small flickering ideal that was burning within him. From this he began the process of moulding himself and his environment toward that ideal—he became an amasser of knowledge, a keeper of records, a synthesizer, ever undertaking increasing control of himself and his terrestrial situation.

At first there were no texts; learning was handed down from the elders to other members of the family group. This proved limited because the task of simple memory must have excluded the transmitting of more complicated knowledge—an emphasis on rhyme and song must have prevailed; it was limiting because knowledge learned by other peoples in other parts of the ancient world was not available due to their remoteness, ineffectiveness of methods of communication, and preservation of records. (Less than 100 years ago a letter from St. Joseph, Missouri, to Sacramento, California, took seven days to arrive.) Books, even a primitive and perishable type such as a clay tablet or a papyrus leaf, surely represented an advanced state of progress. Nor could the research and dissemination of knowledge be left to those not inclined to appreciate the importance of what was being done and what needed to be done. Through the centuries civilization has increasingly demanded of those men and women of genious who could work with patience, understand in depth, and synthesize with vision.

THE GREEKS WERE GREAT NOT BECAUSE THEY WERE DIVINE, BUT BECAUSE THEIR GODS WERE HUMAN

Without reviewing the events that led to the hegemony of Athens, its subsequent fall to, but domination of Rome, and then

the rise of this great Empire, encompassing all the known world, reaching its optimum brilliance in the early days of the Christian era—dimming somewhat until the Gothic invasions of the 5th century altered the course of its trajectory, let us pick up the surge of Western languages at this time when Rome is being fragmented into different provinces whose inhabitants will at first speak imperfectly the native tongue; each will speak a "sermo plebeius" which will in time become a *romance* and then the great vehicles of Western Culture Spanish, French, Italian, Swiss-Romance, Rumanian, Portuguese, Sardinian, Dalmatian, Catalan, and Provenzal.

SPAIN BECAME THE MOST ROMAN OF ALL HER COLONIES

On the Iberian peninsula before the arrival of the Arabs in 711 the amalgamation of the Ligurians, Tartesians, Iberians, Celts, Phoenicians, Carthagenians, and Greeks, was proceeding steadily just as the Angles, Saxons and Jutes were to become part of the demographic mosaic of our own ancestors the Celts, Erse, and Romans in the British Isles to the north, before the coming of the French in 1066. From this peninsula came Theodosius, Trajan, Hadrian, Marcus Aurelius—all Roman emperors, as well as many early Roman writers and philosophers like Prudentius, Lucan, Quintilian, Marcial, Mela, Columela, and the Senecas.

This Roman Colony, more than any other, very early produced the prototype of what will be recognized generations later as the typical man of the renaissance, (Garcilaso de la Vega)—a man of the sword and of the pen. Spain perhaps did not need a return to a renaissance "homocentric" society--it may never have had any other kind. So strong was the course of humanity that even the church, exerting a spiritual pall over Spanish life did not even during the period of its greatest ascendency achieve an idealistic autonomy apart from the simple, customary, folkways of the people. Indeed, the literature and writings of the church fathers from St. Isidore to Gonzalo de Berceo, Juan Ruiz, and Juan del Encina show the unmistakable stamp of the common man both in language and spirit. This long Latin struggle toward an ideal of humanity planted firmly on the tradition of what had served best parallels very closely our own English heritage from the Celts, King John and the Magna Carta to the small groups that came to settle at Jamestown and Plymouth Rock; just as we have had George Washington and Abraham Lincoln, so has the Spanish world Simon Bolivar and Benito Juarez, to their Silva and Reyes we have appended Poe and Emerson.

WHY STUDY A FOREIGN LANGUAGE—THE FUNDAMENTAL VALUE IS HUMANISTIC

University and College administrators and educators have long confronted the problem of what kind of knowledge a graduate who has specialized should possess. The non-specialist? What sort of person should he be? How can we train him to best exemplify the ideal qualities? Europe, since World War II, has led the way by insisting that its engineering and scientific graduates have equal training in the humanities. No less a man than the late President John F. Kennedy, himself steeped in the humanities, felt no compunction over inviting one of our own great poets and philosophers, the late Robert Frost, to the White House for his views. Plato's statement that the true philosopher is the constant seeker after truth seems especially appropriate, now when the pursuit of this ideal has carried us to the thresh-hold of an optimism, finite but unbounded. Twentieth century scientists, standing on the shoulders of giants, from Lee de Forest to Robert Millikan and J. Robert Oppenheimer have created an exciting new scientific world, but they, most of all, have recognized that the very narrowness of their specialization has too often precluded the acquisition of necessary knowledge from other disciplines that would enable them to intelligently direct the resultant processes. Oppenheimer read other languages voraciously, including the ***Rig Veda*** and other Hindu literature, in the original.

Dr. William Riley Parker asks, "what will be true of a student with *no* experience of learning a modern foreign language?" He answers: (1) He will have missed an intellectual experience which has been integral to the humanistic tradition in universities of the Western world from the remotest beginnings. (2) He will lack a perspective on his own language—his linguistic horizons will be fixed. This will be especially conspicious because he is a citizen of a multilingual world. If he travels, he will have to depend on translations (when they exist—and for those written items that a translation can be substituted for) or knowledge at second hand.[1]

VEHICLE OF THOUGHTS

These are the words of Dr. Paul Hazard:

It is the task of foreign language professors to get young minds accustomed to get out of themselves, out of their normal environment, to come into contact with other forms of expression and thought and thus enrich them by making them more supple. It is their task to break down their narrow horizons and make them partake of (and contribute to) the existence of the world. It is

[1] *Parker, William R., "Why a Foreign Language Requirement," College and University, Winter, 1957, P. 197.*

their task also to struggle against the invasion of technology and machines, by reminding them that man's ideal does not consist solely in enslaving matter for his needs but also to multiply his powers of life through the acquisition of a better nourishing thought, a more delicate sensibility, and a more fraternal soul . . . . It is their task to make others understand that humanity is not limited to a single moment—the present—nor to a single nation—however powerful it might be; rather it is their task to link the present to the past and the nation to all other nations, while preserving both the memory and cult of the desperate shouts, songs of love, hymns of hope, epics, comedies, dramas, which the most divine of the sons of men, geniuses, have scattered in space and time.[2]

Most agree that any study of a foreign language must lead directly to a capacity to read the literature of that language. Why is this so, we might ask. It is true because literature, more than any other field contains the accounts of the greatest number of broad human experiences; it contains the collected humor and tragedy of a people; it offers their entire verbal art. It, almost alone, offers us the key to the collective mind from which we may draw the greatest number of comparisons and conclusions, with which we may be able to nourish our own greatest degree of intellectual growth and appreciation. True, the study of other subjects in the foreign language will also offer, to a degree, certain specialized insights into another culture. After literature, in order, these might be philosophy, history, politics, sociology, psychology, science, medicine, and mathematics. There is another reason, however, why we should choose foreign literature: It is the one subject whose manuscripts and criticisms are most likely to be preserved, and thus available to us today.

In summary we may say that the teaching of a foreign language opens the mind of the student to other ways of thinking, other patterns of behavior, other values. Moreover, the intense mental activity required for this study conditions the student for a better understanding of the whole panorama of man by forcing him to weigh and compare the diverse elements of language and culture.

WHY ELECT SPANISH

In America we have traditionally offered our students either Spanish, French or German (lately, Russian), all European languages, sister tongues of English, all containing elements of our Greco-Roman heritage. Some colleges and universities have offered more exotic languages like Swahili, Chinese, and Hebrew. Our task is to select a single language that will offer the greatest number of advantages to the greatest number of students, that will also be

[2]*Hazard, Paul, Le Professeur de francais,* The French Review, Vol. XIV, February 1941, pp. 277-283.

compatible with the direction in which this nation must proceed. Whatever will serve the students will serve the nation. We cannot choose a European language long associated with any movement for the educated few. We shall have to eliminate those languages that have less than 100,000,000 speakers, because our students having learned the language would have little chance to use it. We will not consider the language of a country that is not spoken in areas of a wide geographical distribution—we will choose a European language whose geographical distribution is as wide as possible—preferably one spoken near enough to America that continued contact is inevitable. We shall choose a European language over a more exotic one because we share a common culture and because similar linguistic elements, especially graphemic ones, will not render the language too hard to master, as might be the case with Chinese or Japanese, for example. (As to degree of difficulty, most European languages are about equally difficult for Americans—some presenting more difficult elements in one area and some in another. This is not to say that other European languages aren't to be offered. There will be an increasing need for French, German, Italian, Portuguese and other European and non-European languages.

Our students will represent a cross section of America. We have been working toward the great American dream of educating everybody—now we are attempting to give all students a foreign language. (In 40 states Spanish is being offered. In California all students are required to take Spanish beginning in the sixth year.) Great areas in the United States from California to Florida contain hundreds of thousands of native speakers of Spanish. A glance at the phone directory of city after city from Los Angeles to St. Augustine shows almost every important surname from Araujo to Zorilla. It may be added that almost the same can be said of other cities and towns from New York to Fort Madison, Iowa. We are not attempting to continue in quality the education of these adult Americans, however to neglect to develop this unique American resource, by not offering their children the opportunity of continued enrichment seems inconceivable.

Spanish America will continue to be a fertile field for American business investment and development. Of private U. S. investments abroad totaling 45 billion dollars in 1964, nine billion dollars was invested in Spanish America. There are over 3,000 Spanish American subsidiaries of American Companies. Among these corporations are those engaged in petroleum, mining, sugar, fruit production and distribution, railways, public utilities, textiles, aviation,

importing, exporting, banking, engineering, and construction. These far-flung activities offer the American job seeker an extremely wide spectrum of opportunities; they range from clerks, junior engineers and managers to presidents and junior executives of companies. It is not surprising then that Spanish is listed first in demand for employment by the Federal Government, employment agencies, and American companies; American schools will need almost double the number of Spanish teachers we now have within the next decade to train the Americans who will fill these jobs and maintain a social life in the areas where they work. We are definitely succeeding in making friends there. Of all the foreign visitors to the United States in 1964 over 500,000 were from our neighbors in Spanish-speaking countries.

The demographic possibilities for expansion in South America are equaled only by English in the United States and Canada; in this hemisphere the two are mutually free from linguistic competition. All Central and South America, outside Brazil, can actually support between 500,000,000 and a billion people. This is not a dream. There will actually be over 300 million Spanish-speaking people in the Americas by the year 1975; its population even now is greater than that of the U. S., and is expected to double by the year 2,000. Russia, India, Africa, and China are not linguistic units within themselves. In China, for example, a Chinese from Peiping has difficulty conversing with one from Canton. Spanish is basically the same all over the world, and historically has changed less than English. A present-day American would have more difficulty reading Chaucer than his Spanish counterpart would have reading Juan Ruiz. This unity and conservative character of Spanish is its greatest virtue as an international language. Its constant phonetic and lexical values give it an inherent tenacity and ultimate traveling power.

SPANISH ARTISTS ARE WORLD RENOWNED

There was a time when American artists thought that all art stemmed from Paris; that is no longer their thinking. New influences are flooding in from both Spain and South America. In the 1890's Velásquez was rediscovered and in the early years of this century the vigorous Sorolla, Zuloaga and Anglada. Then the modernists turned in adoration to El Greco and Goya, Murillo and Zurbarán, and now Rivera, Orozco and Picasso have conquered the American art world. The museums of these countries contain

many of the world's great art treasures, but a visit to any of them without the ability to use Spanish would be a one-dimensional, sight only, visit at best.

As pointed out earlier, although France, Rumania, Italy, Switzerland, Portugal and other areas all possess linguistic and cultural elements from Rome and Athens, Spain alone inherited the main stream of Roman thought and more than any other succeeded in transferring it to the new world. Who else has produced a new world epic based on the ancient models? What other nation's military and colonial leaders were authors and poets as well as military men? What other literature has given to the world five universal characters: Don Juan, Lazarillo, Don Quixote, Sancho, and La Celestinà? How else account for the conquest of so many hundreds of thousands of square miles of new world territory, the blending of so many millions of American Indians into European culture. These 18 Spanish-speaking republics, becoming colonies at first, and then fighting and winning their independence, as we did, carry along side us, in this hemisphere, the torch of education, liberty, and freedom. We are only a border crossing from the most progressive Spanish-speaking country anywhere. Truly great accomplishments are forthcoming from the Mexican people within this century. No less can be said of many other Central and South American countries. The Pan American highway has been constructed, but it is not yet the four-lane superhighway, with way stations, fine motels and elegant shops it is destined to become within this century. Air travel time is now very short even between points in the United States and remote parts of South America. With the development of supersonic jet service, now already financed, planes flying at speeds of 2000 miles per hour will bring cities like Lima and Buenos Aires within two or three hours flying time. The vast area of Central and South America then represents America's future. There lie the great virgin forests, the almost limitless water supply, mineral and human resources, the variety of climate for vacationing Americans, from the sweltering beaches of the coastal cities to the ski resorts of the Andes; the spirit of a people, representing, as we, 5000 years of struggle for the greatest good for the greatest number of people, whatever their class or status in society. ¡Vâmonos!

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